

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Claims 2, 6, 8, 10, 16 and 20 are currently being amended. The amendment to claim 2 is to correct a typographical error, and does not narrow the scope of that claim. Claims 5 and 7 are currently cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

This amendment cancels and changes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After amending the claims as set forth above, claims 1-2, 4, 6 and 8-22 are now pending in this application, of which claims 9, 12, 14 and 19-20 are withdrawn from consideration.

Examiner Interview

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended by Examiner Ford in the telephone interview of September 10, 2004. The substance of the interview is provided in the Interview Summary dated September 10, 2004, which is of record in the present application. Applicants' representative, Thomas Bilodeau, discussed the reference JP 3-87063, which Examiner Ford found in the application file. Applicants' representative informed Examiner Ford that applicants had not submitted JP 3-87063 to the Patent Office in an Information Disclosure Statement, and that applicants' representative was unaware of how JP 3-87063 had come to be in the application file. Examiner Ford graciously provided a copy of JP 3-87063 to applicants via facsimile.

Applicants submit herewith an Information Disclosure Statement with a copy of JP-3-87063 formally submitting JP-3-87063 for formal consideration by the Examiner.

Allowable subject matter

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 1, 2, 4, 11, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 22 are allowed, and that claim 10 would be allowable if amended to be in independent form, and to

overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claim 10 has been amended to be in independent form, and to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, and thus is in *prima facie* condition for allowance. Claims 6, 8 and 16 have been amended so that claims 6, 8, 16 and 17 now ultimately depend from claim 10, and thus claims 6, 8, 16 and 17 are also in *prima facie* condition for allowance.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claim 10 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Applicants have amended claim 10 to describe the location of the notches as adjacent the reinforcing section, thus overcoming the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 5-8 and 16-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over the combined teaching any one of JP248783, JP 4244596, Iokawa (USP 6,012,513) or Matsuura (USP 5,535,819) and any one of Hiramatsu (USP 4,332,293), JP 9-113153 or Nagasaka et al. (USP 5,197,538). These rejections are moot in light of the cancellation of claims 5 and 7, and the amendment of claims 6, 8 and 16 to depend directly from claim 10 (claim 17 depends indirectly from claim 10 through its dependence on claim 16), which has been amended to be in *prima facie* condition for allowance, as discussed above.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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